



# CORRUPT AND DANGEROUS

Tories end Covid rules and count up dodgy cash >>Pages 4 & 5

EXCLUSIVE  
ARMED COPS'  
SEXIST EMAILS

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# Socialist Worker

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## TORY THREATS OVER UKRAINE

# STOP THEM DRAGGING US TO WAR



- Biden and West want to dominate eastern Europe
- Fight against all the imperialists and their system

### NOW FIGHT TO STOP THE HORROR

THE RULERS of the West and Russia stood on the brink of starting a huge and devastating war as Socialist Worker went to press.

Behind it is not a battle for the interests of the ordinary people of Ukraine or anywhere else—but a battle for power and influence in eastern Europe.

Prime minister Boris Johnson said on Monday that he would consider “sending further defensive support to Ukraine.”

His spokesperson added that Johnson had agreed with the Ukrainian president that “the West needed to support Ukraine in the event of an invasion.”

That dry diplomatic language masks the possibility that Britain could be involved directly in a war with Russia.

In comes after Russian president Vladimir Putin ordered

Putin—another imperialist

soldiers into the separatist Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. He said the soldiers were on a “peacekeeping” mission. But neither he nor the West are interested in protecting ordinary people.

The US wants to extend its Nato military alliance in Europe, while Putin wants Russia to challenge it.

The West should stop its drive to war and the Russian troops should get out of Ukraine.

The only good response must be a cry against war, and the system of competition that produces it.

And that means fighting to stop our own government from pushing it further.

See pages 5, 6 and  
14&15 for full coverage



## THE THINGS THEY SAY

**'There's been a traditional economic view, not just on the right but generally on the right, which says that the market will find its own level. But actually all our experience is that that is not the case'**

Michael Gove, communities secretary

**'By paying a massive cheque to avoid a showdown in court, he's confirmed himself to be a snivelling little coward whose denials and demands weren't worth the paper they were written on'**

Piers Morgan on Prince Andrew settling his abuse case. He will be very upset when he finds out how much the Mirror group has paid out to settle phone hacking cases from when he edited their newspapers



# No growth in green jobs as energy profits rocket

**FORGET ALL** the blather, Britain's low-carbon and renewable energy economy has failed to grow since 2014 and official data shows a fall in the number of green jobs.

The Office for National Statistics last week said its latest figures, covering 2020, showed "no significant change" in turnover and job numbers in the sector compared with six years earlier.

Employment in the low-carbon and renewable energy economy—which includes manufacturing, energy supply and construction—fell by about 28,000 across Britain over the period.

Some of the steepest declines were in factories producing energy-efficient products, onshore wind, and solar energy.

The sector with the largest growth in jobs was in low-emission vehicles and infrastructure, where employment more than doubled to 19,100.

But this was not enough to offset bigger falls elsewhere, including a decline of or 32,000, in the number

## ENERGY CIRISIS?

- 1 SSE recorded profits of £3.37 billion from 2016-17 to 2020-21, including £604.8 million in the most recent filing
- 2 Centrica (parent of British Gas) banked a hot £2.05 billion from 2016 to 2020
- 3 Scottish Power recorded a £1.4 billion operating profit from 2016 to 2020
- 4 E.ON posted a cumulative profit for the years 2016-20 of over £432 million
- 5 EDF posted losses from 2018-20, but its cumulative operating profit from 2016-20 is £358 million

of jobs in energy-efficient product manufacturing.

**BRITAIN'S BIG** six energy firms have banked more than £7 billion in operating profit in just five years. The figures come just as the energy price cap, the maximum amount a utility company can charge a customer each year, is set to rise by 54 percent.

Five of the biggest energy firms have recorded £7.66 billion in cumulative earnings before interest and taxes.

The figures, based on an analysis of statements prepared for the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem) regulator, show that SSE, Scottish Power, E.ON, EDF and Centrica—which owns British Gas—have all banked operating profits (see box).

Only Npower, acquired by E.ON in 2019, posted losses in its Ofgem filings from 2016-19 under parent company RWE.

## Coffee bosses' haul rises as fast as prices

**COFFEE GIANT** Starbucks last week reported a 31 percent increase in profits during the final three months of 2021. But the massive US-based coffee chain nevertheless announced plans to further increase prices this year.

Starbucks CEO Kevin Johnson's pay package soared by 39 percent to £15 million last year. He told investors that "supply-chain disruptions" and rising labour costs are to blame for the coming price increases.

Starbucks' revenue grew to £6 billion at the tail-end of 2021—a 19 percent jump compared to the previous year.

Ed Davey

**EX-HEALTH SECRETARY** Matt Hancock broke equality law by handing Tory peer Dido Harding a top health job, the High Court found last week.

Two judges ruled that Hancock did not comply with a public sector equality duty in relation to the appointments of Harding and Mike Coupe to posts in 2020.

The ruling centred on Hancock's decision to appoint Harding as interim executive chair of the National Institute for Health Protection in August 2020 and ex-Sainsbury's boss Coupe as director of testing for NHS Test and Trace in September 2020.

Matt Hancock

**HARROW RESIDENTS** are battling to stop the infamous posho public school from closing a footpath used by parents and pupils at a state primary nearby.

Harrow School will shut off a footpath on its grounds that provides quick and easy access to Roxeth Primary. Parents and pupils at Roxeth, as well as the wider public, have used the path for many years. The school says the area is private property.

## Thames Water pumps sewage into Thames

**THAMES WATER** is being investigated after more than two billion litres of raw sewage was discharged into the river over a period of two days.

Mogden wastewater treatment works, in Isleworth in west London, released the equivalent of 400 Olympic swimming pools of untreated waste into the Thames on 3 and 4 October 2020.

This is in comparison to half a billion litres of waste from the site spilled into the river in the whole of 2016. Last

month's Water Quality and Rivers Report showed the amount of raw sewage leaking into the Thames has soared in recent years.

Around 3.5 billion litres of raw sewage contaminated the river in 2020—meaning two-thirds of this resulted from the two-day spillage.

Thames Water was fined £4 million last May after it allowed a total of nearly 80 million litres of sewage to flood across a public park.

## Spy cops' infiltration wrecks anti-racist group

**A BLACK Lives Matter (BLM)** group in south Wales has closed down after revelations that a covert police unit attempted to recruit one of its members to be an informant.

The Swansea BLM group said it had decided to dissolve itself for a number of reasons, including the attempted recruitment by the police. Lowri Davies, one of the group's main organisers, exposed a covert police operation to persuade her to become an informant last year by secretly recording the approach.

It was the first public evidence that the police have sought to enlist a mole within the Black Lives Matter movement in Britain.

Last week Davies said the attempt by South Wales police to recruit her had caused "a massive impact" on the group, leading to members drifting away.

## Ed Davey's consult cash in

**LIB DEM** leader Ed Davey was forced to apologise last week. He had failed to declare his £18,000-a-year interest in Next Energy Capital when asking parliamentary questions about alternative energy of the sort that Next invests in.

Yet, says Private Eye magazine, Davey's far larger £60,000-a-year position as "consultant on political issues and policy analysis to [City law firm] Herbert Smith Freehills" merits little scrutiny.

This is despite him having influence on his MPs' voting on everything from the economy and tax to public services.

These are areas where Herbert Smith and its corporate clients will be very interested.

There is no sign of Davey reconsidering his double role as leading politician and private political consultant.

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# Exclusive-sexist emails shared by armed cops

by CHARLIE KIMBER

**SOCIALIST WORKER** can reveal a new string of vile, misogynist messages that circulated among Metropolitan Police armed response unit officers. They underline the toxic culture that is endemic in the force.

They have been shared exclusively with Socialist Worker and will reinforce the deluge of recent disclosures about the rot at the centre of the police.

This has already led to the resignation of Met boss Cressida Dick.

The person who sent us the messages said, "At the time I saw them as so normal among this group.

"But now after the murder of Sarah Everard and other revelations I want everyone to know just what horrible things they send round to each other.

"What's shocking is that they were clearly seen as amusing and part of the day to day culture of the force.

"I saw the lockers of the police involved, and I remember one of them had stickers of crossed-out dogs, referring to those he had shot."

A series of emails take up the theme of "Why some men have dogs not wives".

They include, "Ultimate true test—lock your wife and your dog in the trunk of your car for an hour and see who's the happiest to see you."

Others say, "A dog will let you put a studded collar on it without calling you a pervert," and, "Dogs agree that you have to raise your voice to get the point across," and, "If a dog smells another dog on you, they don't get mad. They just think it's interesting," and, "If a dog leaves it won't take half of your stuff."

**THERE HAS BEEN** a deluge of recent disclosures about the rot at the centre of the Metropolitan Police

None of these, circulated by and among top cops, were ever challenged or regarded as in any way improper or unacceptable.

Another email, initiated by a member of the elite force, shares a "Yogi Bear song".

Its words include, "Yogi's got a girlfriend bear, Suzie, Suzie/Suzie she likes whips and chains, kinky, kinky/Suzie shaves her pubic hair, grizzly, grizzly/Boo-Boo turns up with his friends, gang bang, gang bang, he's a gang bang bear."

The emails were circulated among members of the CO19 (now SCO19) armed response unit.

This is the firearms unit of the Metropolitan Police.

It is given all the latest weaponry in its armed response vehicles.

These are identified by a circular yellow sticker on the front and back windows, along with a star on the roof for identification by police helicopters.

One of those who received the messages was later involved in the

shooting of Mark Saunders in 2008, which an inquest jury found to be "lawful killing".

Socialist Worker has the identity of the officers involved, in sending the messages and receiving them.

These have been withheld to ensure the anonymity of the person who revealed the messages to us.

## What's your story?

Email with your ideas  
[reports@socialistworker.co.uk](mailto:reports@socialistworker.co.uk)

## Not just a few bad apples

SCO19 ARMED response unit used to be known as SO19—part of the Specialist Operations units.

Other SO units included SO6 and SO17 that were merged to become the Parliamentary and Diplomatic Protection branch. This is where Wayne Couzens, the murderer of Sarah Everard, worked.

A recent report from the usually tame Independent Office of Police Conduct found that Met police officers routinely made jokes about rape and exchanged racist messages.

It detailed a pattern of misogyny and

bullying in the force and said the episodes were not isolated ones or the work of a few "bad apples."

The report added that "the casual exchange and blase nature of this communication indicates a culture where officers were comfortable to make these comments, suggesting it was part of a status quo rather than an exception to the norm."

In addition, "The messages appeared to be sent without fear of repercussion or consequence." The messages exposed by Socialist Worker confirm this completely.

Cressida Dick—forced out

## Faith in Met police takes a tumble

ORDINARY PEOPLE are increasingly aware that the Metropolitan Police isn't their friend.

Figures published last week showed a big fall in support for the cops during the five years Cressida Dick was leading Britain's biggest force.

Only 51 percent of those in London said they believed the Met did a good job in their local area. That's down 17 points compared with the last survey before Dick became Met commissioner in April 2017.

In the majority of London's 32 boroughs, 50 percent or less said they believed the force did a good job. In March 2017, not a single borough was below 50 percent.

## Concerns

Figures for police reliability, fairness and listening to people's concerns are all down by 10 percentage points or more in the past five years.

Compared with five years ago, the proportion of people who believe police treat everyone fairly has fallen 15 points, from 79 percent to 64 percent.

That's still a majority. But it means a third of people have seen through the idea that the police are a neutral body—a central myth of how the state works.

People's views have clearly been shifted. This has been helped by the Black Lives Matter movement and mobilisations after the murder of Sarah Everard.

The outcry over harsh implementation of measures during the pandemic and protests against the police bill have also shone a light on the true role of the police.

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# Tory donors grabbed access to Number 10

**Simon Basketter** shows how an elite group donated £22 million to the Tories in the hope of shaping key government policies

## BACK STORY

A £250,000 donation to the Conservatives allowed the ultra-wealthy into the heart of government as part of a secret 'advisory board'

● The board lobbied ministers for lower taxes on the rich and an end to lockdown.

● The revelation comes after the Tory politician second job scandals which further opened the door to big business lobbying.

group of ultra-wealthy Tory party donors.

One meeting took place online the same day as one of the garden parties in Downing Street, with Britain deep in the pandemic.

### Advisor

Lord Udry-Lister, Johnson's chief strategic adviser, met with board members who were alarmed by the effect of Covid-19 on their businesses.

This allowed some to directly lobby the government on Covid-19 procurement and strategy. Money gave unique opportunities to grab public contracts.

In return, for at least a £250,000 donation the board members, whose investments span property, construction and tobacco, gained privileged access to Boris Johnson and his closest advisers.

The "advisory board" is a secret

A HEADACHE for Boris Johnson as his crisis deepens

what we said would go straight up to the PM." The meeting was also joined by Ben Elliot, prince Charles's nephew, who is a top fundraiser and Tory party chairperson.

The board is a Tory creation so it escapes government monitoring and accountability laws.

According to the Sunday Times, members are told not to record or take notes of meetings, or discuss the effect of Covid-19 on their businesses.

More than a dozen people were routinely invited to advisory board meetings. Of these, at least three are billionaires and six have appeared on The Sunday Times Rich List.

## FIGURE IT OUT

14 regular ultra-wealthy members of the Tories' advisory board

30 billion—the combined wealth of the board, with six reaching the Sunday Times Rich List

22 million given to the Conservative party, of which £9.9 million was under Johnson

## A peek at the Tories' wealthy 'advisory board' members

### LAWRENCE JONES

An internet entrepreneur currently facing trial for rape and sexual assault.

Jones, whose net worth is £700 million, was repeatedly invited to meetings even after it was known he had been interviewed by police in connection with the allegations, which he denies.

### Lubov Chernukhin

The former banker is married to president Putin's former deputy finance minister Vladimir Chernukhin.

She is said to have lobbied against higher tax for the ultra-rich. The Chernukhin's wealth, much of it held offshore, has been estimated to be in excess of £366 million.

### Lord Spencer of Alresford

This financier is worth around £1.2 billion and has given more than £7 million to the Conservatives, including £1.2 million under Johnson.

In 2020, Johnson gave him a peerage, four years after an honours committee had blocked one.

Some of those Tory donors who took part went on to lobby the government directly on Covid-19 strategy and procurement.

Some had fat contracts approved by ministers, and others stashed honours signed off by Johnson.

### Oozing

They pay out more and are treated with oozing respect as members of a formal organisation.

One member said it was "about making sure the Tories continue being in power, whatever we need to do—how to raise more money, how to get the message spread, how

to ensure policies get designed that are business-friendly".

This is another glimpse of the world of patronage and sleaze at the heart of this government.

It is part of an establishment—politicians, cops, royals, businessmen, bankers, Tory donors and media owners—which is rightly more and more reviled.

Johnson has to go, and so does the rotten system his party infests.

### On other pages...

No growth in Green jobs while energy bosses profit >>Page 2

## Cost of living worsens—workers must fight back

# Tory party scraps Covid safety

BORIS JOHNSON this week outrageously confirmed he is axing self-isolation laws for people with Covid. He is also ending free coronavirus testing kits in England for nearly everyone from 1 April.

Self-isolation support payments of £500 for those on low incomes will go.

The scandal-ridden prime minister's "living with Covid" plan essentially ditched measures that protect people. It should be called "dying with Covid".

In a bid to win support from the hard right of his party, which is tempted to remove him as leader, Johnson has accepted its "freedom" agenda.

The new Tory strategy is incredibly dangerous. Ending the testing regime will mean that many people that have Covid won't know for certain. They will be encouraged to carry on working—and spread the disease.

That will put millions of vulnerable people, including those who are older, at risk.

Covid kills nearly 1,500 people in Britain each week.

While the Omicron strain has proved to be a milder form of the disease than those that came before, there are no guarantees that new variants will also be.

The fury over these moves is another reason to drive out Johnson.

The US has for decades sought to compensate for its declining

# IT'S ABOUT MORE THAN WHO FIRED FIRST SHOT

THE mainstream media and politicians are obsessed with who "fired the first shot" in Ukraine. Russia ordered its troops into eastern Ukraine, so all the condemnation must be directed against Vladimir Putin, they say.

Socialist Worker opposes all external military mobilisations, aggression and invasion of Ukraine. But the key issue is about much more than who fired first in any particular week.

Imperialism is not just about major powers bullying and oppressing smaller ones. Capitalist imperialism is about competition between major powers.

It is fundamentally about economic rivalries, but these grow over into potential or actual military escalation. This is the system that has plunged people into war again and again.

No single flashpoint can be abstracted from those wider trends. The path to war in Ukraine began long before the shots were fired this week.

The Nato military alliance, the European Union, Britain and the US are central to ramping up the conflict.

The ruling classes that have presided over a death toll from Covid-19 similar to the First World War are immune to human interests.

The warring politicians who recklessly allow environmental collapse cannot be trusted to steer away from war.

Working class people in Britain, Russia or Ukraine will gain nothing from further conflict. Down with all the warmongers.

## Socialist Worker WHAT WE THINK

# IT'S ABOUT MORE THAN WHO FIRED FIRST SHOT

Africa. Libya has not seen a day of peace since the Nato invasion of 2011.

The eight years of fighting in eastern Ukraine has already claimed over 14,000 lives and left 3.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. That's almost a tenth of Ukraine's population. It has to end.

Socialist Worker says no to all imperialist nations and their war drives.

The British ruling class which is now agitating for war has previously driven us into illegal conflicts that resulted in millions of deaths of innocent people.

Once again the system of competing nation states threatens to detonate a war that will consume many thousands of lives and leave devastation in its wake.

The ruling classes that have presided over a death toll from Covid-19 similar to the First World War are immune to human interests.

The warring politicians who recklessly allow environmental collapse cannot be trusted to steer away from war.

Working class people in Britain, Russia or Ukraine will gain nothing from further conflict. Down with all the warmongers.

# STARMER—TORIES' WAR ALLY

ABOUR LEADER Keir Starmer rushed to show his unity with the Tories after Russia's incursion into Ukraine's separatist regions.

"We must remain united and true to our values across this House and with our Nato allies.

We must show Putin that we will not be divided," he said on Tuesday.

For the past several weeks as some of Johnson's top ministers made a show of threatening Russia, Starmer's Labour Party

only egged them on. On Tuesday,

Labour's shadow foreign secretary David Lammy demanded "strong sanctions" on Russia. "We stand in solidarity with the Ukrainian people," he said.

If Labour really wanted to show solidarity with the Ukrainian people, it would criticise Nato—the Western military alliance whose expansion has pushed them towards war.

Instead, Starmer prepared for

the threat of war by praising Nato,

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## ANALYSIS

ALEX CALLINICOS

## Why the Ukrainian crisis has dragged on

**ROBERT KENNEDY** called his memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962—the greatest confrontation of the Cold War—*Thirteen Days*.

But the present facedown over Ukraine has been going on for a couple of months, and seems to be getting worse.

Moreover, the conflict is, in a certain sense, more symbolic than real. The central demand made by Russian president Vladimir Putin is that the US should guarantee that Ukraine doesn't join Nato.

But it's extremely unlikely that Ukraine will join Nato. All 30 member states have to agree to any new member and—almost certainly—at least one would veto Ukraine joining.

Why risk war with Russia? Even Ukraine's pro-Western president Volodymyr Zelensky said the other day that Nato membership might be “like a dream”.

Putin is demanding that something doesn't happen even when it probably won't happen. And US president Joe Biden is refusing to concede this even if it probably won't happen.

So what's going on? The answer is that neither side can afford to be seen to lose. Putin has real security concerns about Nato's encroachments in Eastern Europe and the Black Sea.

But more fundamentally he wants Russian imperialism to be recognised by the US as a global player, not the “regional power” that Barack Obama once arrogantly called it.

Meanwhile, Biden's domestic programme is blocked by the Republicans in Congress. His standing in the opinion polls has fallen sharply.

Moreover, what tripped him up was a geopolitical setback—Afghanistan's fall last August. As the Financial Times “Swamp Notes” column pointed out, “the collapse in Biden's job-approval rating can be pegged almost to the date that the Taliban overran Kabul.”

“The last time the president's approval rating was above 50 percent was the week before the US-backed Afghan government disappeared. He has been below 50 percent ever since—and is struggling to stay above the 40 percent threshold.”

So Biden hopes that, if he humiliates Putin over Ukraine, his domestic political fortunes may turn up again. This makes the Ukraine crisis peculiarly hard to resolve, unlike the Cuban Missile Crisis with which it is sometimes compared.

That was provoked by the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev's decision to base nuclear missiles in Cuba. He wanted to protect Fidel Castro's revolutionary regime from the efforts of US president John F Kennedy's administration to overthrow it.

### Installed

When Kennedy discovered the missiles being installed, he imposed a naval blockade on Cuba. The world seemed to be on the brink of thermonuclear war.

Then Khrushchev ordered Soviet ships carrying more missiles to turn back. US secretary of state Dean Rusk is supposed to have commented, “We're eyeball to eyeball, and I think the other fellow just blinked.”

In fact, both sides had already blinked. A fascinating recent study by Theodore Voorhees Jr called *The Silent Guns of Two Octobers* shows that for both Kennedy and Khrushchev, nuclear war was unthinkable.

They had been communicating secretly for months through the intermediary of spooks and journalists.

Kennedy got Khrushchev to agree very quickly to withdraw the missiles by making two big concessions.

He promised not to invade Cuba and to withdraw US nuclear missiles based in Turkey and Italy that targeted the Soviet Union.

They agreed to keep the second concession secret to avoid Kennedy being attacked by the Republicans in the mid-term Congressional elections that November.

Kennedy emerged as the victor in the Cuban Missile Crisis. But Khrushchev didn't mind being portrayed as the guy who blinked because Kennedy offered him more than he would have settled for.

This time, however, it's important for both Biden and Putin not to be seen to have blinked. This is a struggle between two imperialist powers, both of which have suffered defeat—Russia in the Cold War, the US in the Greater Middle East.

It's a dangerous combination.

BRITISH AND US soldiers trained together in Poland last month

## West pushes towards Ukraine war as Russia sends in troops

**RUSSIAN president Vladimir Putin ordered troops into eastern Ukraine on Monday after recognising two separatist regions as independent from the rest of the country.**

Putin told his forces to enter the rebel-held Donetsk and Luhansk regions in Ukraine's Donbas border area.

The Russian forces should get out of Ukraine now.

Donetsk and Luhansk border Russia on Ukraine's eastern flank. These largely Russian-speaking regions are home to more than three million people.

Russian support for the regions began after the pro-Western Maidan movement toppled Ukraine's pro-Russian president in February 2014.

### Leverage

Putin has spent the past eight years increasing leverage over the territories. Russia issued passports and citizenship to around 800,000 of their citizens.

Before calling for the troop movements, Putin attacked the Russian revolution of 1917.

He blamed the revolutionary Bolsheviks' policy of allowing freedom for oppressed nationalities for destroying the Russian state.

“Modern Ukraine was entirely and fully created by Russia, more specifically

the Bolshevik, Communist Russia,” Putin said.

“This process began practically immediately after the 1917 revolution, and moreover Lenin and his associates did it in the sloppiest way in relation to Russia—by dividing, tearing from her pieces of her own historical territory.”

This rant underlines how Putin has nothing to do with any sort of socialist tradition.

He is carrying out imperialist manoeuvres. But the main drive towards an appalling war has come from the Nato military alliance and the West.

Nato—a flag of war

## ‘Peace’ is really about profit

**THE FRENCH and German governments say they are anxious to avoid a deeper conflict that could have a devastating effect on European economies.**

**French president Macron persuaded US president Joe Biden to agree “in principle” to direct talks with Putin this week—although they may now be ruled out.**

**European economies are dependent on Russian energy exports—and gas lines that run through Ukraine.**

**The European Union’s talk of “peace” is, in reality, a strategic move**

**to keep the fuel flowing. They are happy to use the Ukraine issue to put pressure on Putin when it suits them.**

**But they want to resist the US demands that they fall into line for a potential war.**

**We should demand that all Western forces are withdrawn from the countries that border Russia and that Nato is dissolved, not extended.**

Monday's events come after the US and NATO increased tensions with Russia.

This included sending 5,000 troops of the US airborne division to Poland and 300 Javelin missiles to Ukraine.

Britain, the US and their European allies said they would impose sanctions in response to Putin sending in his soldiers.

The US government is eager to talk up the horrors of a Russian attack. It claimed this week to have “credible information” that Russian forces have compiled a list of Ukrainian citizens to be “killed or sent to detention camps”.

### Kidnapping

The US has experience of kidnapping its opponents and putting them on its own kill lists. Nevertheless, the story is an attempt to sway opinion in the US and Europe that is largely opposed to war.

More than half of people in the US say America should “stay out” of negotiations, according to a YouGov poll last week.

Ever eager to join the fray, Boris Johnson this week chipped in that Russia “must fail and be seen to fail” if an invasion went ahead.

That is surely code for Western military intervention in Ukraine.

There is a danger that such talk will ratchet up tensions still further.

# Pushbacks and vile texts — reality of state racism

by ISABEL RINGROSE

**HOME OFFICE contractor Mitie has admitted it ignored racist WhatsApp messages sent its employees after receiving complaints.**

The messages sent in a chat of around 120 immigration staff included anti-Asian hate about Chinese people after restaurants closed during the pandemic.

Mitie carries out escorting and deportations for the Home Office in a contract reportedly worth tens of millions annually. It received complaints about the messages two years ago but failed to do anything about them.

In a reference to Syrian refugees arriving by sea a Mitie worker wrote, “They can only stay if they swim all the way,” with another replying, “What, you mean from Syria?”

A photo of migrants in a dinghy was also shared with the caption, “Where Gary Lineker’s house?”—a reference to the television presenter who was housing a refugee.

Mitie has sacked eight workers as a result and is reporting to the Home Office. But the job—deporting migrants—encourages racism.

One Mitie worker spoke out and said, “Things are the worst they’ve ever been with bullying and racism. People are too scared to speak out for fear of facing further bullying or being sacked.”

In June 2021 an employment tribunal said it was “deeply concerned” about Mitie workers describing black colleagues as “cotton pickers”. But the claim of discrimination brought by a worker of Pakistani heritage was rejected.

Islamophobic posts by a worker on Facebook and staff making racist comments about colleagues in work have also circulated.

## Scandal

The scandal comes as the Home Office is set to start work with former Australian foreign minister Alexander Downer.

Downer was behind Australia’s harsh “push back” system that sent boats carrying migrants as far away as Indonesia. Now the Tories have chosen him to review Britain’s border force.

The reality of what pushbacks mean was revealed off the cost of Greece earlier this month. Some 19 refugees died at the beginning of February because of the brutal Greek border force policy supported by the European Union.

The refugees froze to death in Ipsala—a town on the border between Greece and Turkey. Each state blamed the other.

Hundreds of anti-racists joined a protest in Greek capital Athens on Sunday against deportations and pushbacks. It was called by anti-racist



PROTESTERS IN Athens rage against ‘pushback’ border tactics

PICTURE: WORKERS SOLIDARITY

group Keerfa and supported by the Bangladesh Driving Rights Council of Greece.

Keera said they demanded “justice, papers, legalisation for immigrants” and an end to “deportations, murders and pushbacks at the border”.

The global assault on refugees and migrants shows the need for a united movement against racism. Demonstrations held to mark UN anti-racism day will be held in cities across the world on the weekend of 19 March as part of a global day of action.

In Britain, anti-racists will march as part of Stand Up To Racism demonstrations in London, Glasgow and Cardiff supported by the TUC.

For more on the 19 March protests go to [standuptoracism.org.uk](http://standuptoracism.org.uk). Citizenship is a Right protest against the Nationality and Borders Bill, Sunday 27 Feb, Assemble 12pm at the Home Office, London, SW1P 4DF for a march to Parliament Square

## Attack on ‘woke’ teaching

**THE DEPARTMENT for Education (DfE) is using “political impartiality” as a guise to attack anti-racist and anti-colonial teaching.**

New guidance in England’s schools demands teachers cover recent and historical events “in a balanced manner”. The DfE particularly target Black Lives Matter saying the demands of the movement “go beyond the basic shared principle that racism is unacceptable”.

The guidance also covers climate change.

“Where teaching covers the potential solutions for tackling climate change, this may constitute a

political issue,” it says.

Joint NEU general secretary, Mary Bousted said, “The losers in the DfE’s 34-page game of obfuscation about what is and is not a ‘political’ issue will be the students who are denied the opportunity to engage with the most challenging issues of our time.”

“The warning lights that the government is flashing around climate change, racism, world poverty and the legacy of empire as topics of exploration are more likely to decrease students’ engagement with learning than to stimulate it.”

Sam Ord

## Bin strikers march in Coventry

**STRIKING Coventry HGV drivers, who drive bin lorries and other vehicles for the Labour council, marched on Tuesday of this week. The action is part of their battle for better pay.**

Workers, who are on all-out strike, are striking to change the pay grade applied to refuse HGV drivers. They say negotiations could have already brought the strike to an end.

The march on Coventry’s Council House was called by the Unite union because not a single councillor has attended negotiations during more than 25 hours of talks.

Instead the council is paying scab labour to a company owned fully by the council—Tom White Waste—to undermine the strikers’ efforts.

The union is also working to force agencies to stop supplying

Workers fighting a Labour council

workers to Tom White Waste and is leafleting council workplaces across the city.

And it has threatened to threaten to pull its funding for the Labour Party over the dispute.

Yet Labour leader Keir Starmer has twice snubbed the strikers.

Sniggering, he told an interview with BBC radio in Coventry, “I don’t think an industrial dispute in Coventry should influence relations between the Labour Party and its trade unions.”

It came after an official Labour spokesperson said the party wouldn’t listen to “threats” by striking workers.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said, “By failing to attend a single minute of the key negotiations to resolve this dispute, Coventry council’s leadership is showing nothing but disrespect for this workforce and the people of this city.”

Escalated action by Unite is an important step to break the stalemate with the council.

The solidarity and support strikers have received means they’re confident in pushing forward with their fight.

# Protests rise in Morocco over the cost of living

Billionaire prime minister Aziz Akhannouch is under pressure as inflation doubles, reports Nick Clark

**THOUSANDS OF people protested across Morocco, in north Africa, on Sunday against the soaring prices of fuel and other essential goods.**

Protesters gathered outside the parliament building in the capital city Rabat. They chanted slogans against the government for failing to protect ordinary people from spiralling price rises, which have forced people into poverty.

The authorities deployed police in force around the protest site.

Protests also took place in other cities across Morocco including Agadir, Casablanca and Meknes. In Safi, people gathered in front of the headquarters of the Democratic Confederation of Labour Union (CDT) national trade union centre and demanded government action.

The demonstrations called on the authorities to raise workers' wages and undo the increase in the prices of basic materials and fuel. CDT organisers demanded that the government engage in talks with unions.

The protesters raised banners that read, "No to high prices."

## Billionaire

The protests come amid anger at the government of billionaire prime minister Aziz Akhannouch, who was elected just five months ago in September last year.

Lists of new, higher supermarket prices for staples such as petrol, vegetable oil and flour spread on social media with the hashtag "Akhannouch get out".

Yet Akhannouch has been almost silent on inflation, except to dodge blame.

In a rare interview in January—only his first since being elected—he practically dismissed price rises as a problem, insisting the situation in Morocco is "better than other countries."

"They are temporary rises," he said. Yet official data showed that the consumer price index in Morocco increased 1.4 percent in 2021.

It's a low figure compared to Britain, but twice what it was in 2020. In response to the protests, budget minister Fouzi Lekjaa

## BACK STORY

**Anger over rising prices, particularly of fuel, saw protests in several cities across Morocco last weekend**

- The government has tried to wash its hands of the price rises, offering no real action and claiming it is a temporary issue
- The rise in inflation coincides with a harsh drought that is the result of catastrophic climate change
- The main trade unions are at the centre of the demands for change.

insisted the government had tried to implement measures to help ordinary people. But he admitted these had been "insufficient."

Akhannouch is the top boss of the giant Moroccan oil and gas conglomerate Akwa Group, which controls around 50 companies.

Forbes magazine estimates he and his family are worth £1.2 billion.

Meanwhile, price rises have hit poorer families hardest. Many of them are suffering from two years of the coronavirus pandemic. Some 430,000 people lost their jobs in 2020 alone.

## Drought

People are also reeling from one of the worst droughts in decades.

The national average rainfall is 64 percent lower than normal this year.

Yet the government's own figures estimate that nearly two-thirds of families in Morocco are not connected to the water network, leaving families dependent on deep wells for their families and land.

This reality lay behind the tragedy of five year old Rayan Oram, who made headlines across the world this month after falling down a well and dying.

Sunday's protests were timed to coincide with the anniversary of the 20 February movement of 2011—a series of demonstrations inspired by the Arab revolutions that year.

A PROTESTER in Rabat holds a sign reading, "Enough neglect, poverty and humiliation."

## BRAZIL

# Mudslide horror exposes Bolsonaro

UP TO 140 people died and 200 were reported missing after a mudslide ripped through the south eastern city of Petropolis in Brazil.

The destruction is a consequence of poor city planning that has failed to prepare for heavier rainfall.

Before the mudslide hit, ten inches of rain fell in just three hours—the most in over 70 years. Far right Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro visited the city this week and suggested that there was no money for climate adaptations.

He told a crowd, "A lot of times, we have no way to guard against everything that might

## Rescuers search for survivors

happen." His speech was met with anger from residents who said the government wasn't doing enough.

A resident of the Vila Felipe neighbourhood said, "As a resident living here for 46 years,

I'm sure that as soon the sun comes out and the weather stabilises, they won't come here anymore and give attention to us.

"The people, on their own, will clean things up, rebuild, and some time in the future, this will happen again."

Only a decade ago, more than 900 people were killed in Petropolis by floods and landslides, yet adequate protections against extreme weather events weren't made.

Without adequate protection from the effects of climate change, the poorest and most vulnerable people will continue to suffer.

**Sophie Squire**

## NEPAL

# US cash triggers resistance over fears of war

RIOT POLICE in Nepal fired tear gas and water cannon at protesters in the capital Kathmandu this week. People on the streets hit back with a hail of stones and rocks.

Demonstrators are angry that the governing coalition has accepted a £366 million grant from the US Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC).

The money is part of a pact to fund infrastructure projects signed

in 2017. But many suspect this is the beginning of a US strategic plan that will end with American troops in Nepal.

Protesters see the move as part of the US's ongoing battle with China.

When Nepalese politicians, including those from the country's two main Communist Parties, tried to refuse the money they were met with US threats. Nepal is a

desperately poor country.

In the countryside, even the most basic infrastructure barely exists.

But many consider US money as being even more dangerous.

If the US was to use Nepal as a staging post for threats against China, the lives of millions of Nepalese people would surely take a turn for the worse.

**Yuri Prasad**

## Pop-up bar crashes down

THE SATURDAY before last Clapton Community FC played Stonewall FC in a non-league football match in east London. After the game many of the 300 fans headed to Two More Years for a social.

Two More Years is a pop-up bar—named after the length of its lease—in a converted warehouse.

After around 15 minutes there was a loud cracking sound. Right before me—seemingly in slow motion to start with and then with an almighty rush—the ceiling fell to the floor.

Those of us at ground level facing it immediately shouted, "Get out!"

Along with the collapse coming down in a V-shape, this enabled those under the ceiling to move away without any serious injuries.

But the situation was not so lucky for those who were sitting above.

We gathered outside checking for missing friends with a mixture of shock, worry, and increasing anger.

How could a floor collapse?

There will be questions to be answered about the planning, the construction methods and who carried out the work.

Hopefully the investigation by the fire brigade and Tower Hamlets council will find the cause and attempt to prevent a repeat that could put our lives in danger.

In the end three people were taken to hospital with serious injuries. We were lucky that there weren't deaths.

**Mick Allchin**  
London



ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

Just a thought...

## Tories and police are the criminals

WHY IS it that throughout history the Tories always try to make working people look like criminals? And they use the police to enforce the idea.

Nothing has changed, except the greed of the Tories is worse.

After Met police leader Cressida Dick's resignation, we have an even more corrupt group of people with the power to pick the next "rotten apple" to enforce the Tories' rule.

The police draw in the type of people they want to employ.

It pays to join them if you're criminal minded, just as much as it does joining the Tory party.

**Andrew Dudley**  
Facebook

**CRESSIDA DICK** is a liar of Boris Johnson proportions. I remember her mocking a liaison between a home secretary and a police protection officer on the television series *The Bodyguard* as ludicrous.

Yet precisely the same thing had happened on her watch.

**Philip Foxe**  
Facebook

## Sunak is a rich fraud

TORY chancellor Rishi Sunak's £200 "discount" on fuel bills is not just misleading, it is criminally fraudulent and needs to be held to account.

I urge comrades to lodge a formal complaint with the Financial Conduct Authority.

**Jim Peters**  
Email

## Unite union must commit to at least 10 percent pay rises

SHARON GRAHAM, the recently elected general secretary of the Unite union, has rightly stated that the rate of inflation should be measured by using RPI not CPI.

CPI is the more favourable method of calculation for employers. It currently stands at 5.5 percent.

RPI offers a more accurate measurement of inflation by including more factors. This is now at 7.8 percent.

Rising prices have had a devastating effect, as working people and families struggle to make ends meet.

Meanwhile, bosses and shareholders are stocking up on champagne and purchasing new holiday homes with their increased wealth and bonuses

taken straight from workers' pockets.

Never has the wealth and class divide been so evident.

It is absolutely vital that across all sectors and industries workers organise and demand a pay rise starting at the 10 percent mark.

Inflation shows no signs of stalling, and the role Unite can play is enormous. It must uphold its commitment that members aren't to be made to pay for the current economic crisis.

Unite must throw itself behind every striking worker and picket line across Britain.

That's especially important at a time when we have a Labour Party that has made it very clear it won't be coming to save us.

Unite should agree a motion

across all its regional and national structures to advise and support its workplace representatives to put in pay claims at no less than 10 percent.

The trade union movement can fill the void Labour has left. It's time for workers to unite—whether in aerospace or hospitality.

We must stand side by side in solidarity and fight for one another.

If there are strikes in our local regions, every trade unionist must look to give branch donations, letters of solidarity and support the picket lines.

Unions are only as strong as their lay members. It's time for us to say no more pay cuts.

**Jed Ellis**  
Rolls-Royce Aero Bristol and Unite shop stewards committee

## Students and workers demand LGBT+ inclusion

IN December 2021 UCL university in central London severed its links with Stonewall, Britain's leading LGBT+ charity. This was in defiance of the student union, staff unions and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

The decision was made on transphobic grounds under the guise of "upholding academic freedoms".

It came as a massive blow to LGBT+ students and workers. But there was

resistance, and a protest against the decision was organised recently.

Trans and pride flags and a Unison union banner joined.

Assembling at the main campus and later outside the dean's office, protesters demanded the university re-form ties with Stonewall.

This is needed to ensure the rights and safety of its trans students and the workers.

**Anoushka Mago**  
London

## Unsafe masks risk workers in the NHS

AS AN NHS worker, I was so angry when I received an email at work that said the face mask FFP2 NR had been recalled after a safety alert.

The email from our NHS trust was sent to over 6,000 workers.

It said that the mask model number N9501F made by Zhende Medical "had been removed from government IPC guidance".

"These were received very early in the pandemic so may have already been used," it continued reassuringly. It added,

"These face masks are not currently supported for use and should not be worn" with "immediate effect".

Worryingly, workers may still be using and storing the inadequate equipment.

Why has it taken two years to realise these are not safe?

Not only were we left with a lack of PPE during the pandemic when we risked our lives but it turns out that what we did have was dangerous.

Trusts supplying unsafe masks is a warning to all health workers.

It's further proof of a need to fight back for better safety and conditions against the people who thought clapping us weekly was enough.

**Anonymous**  
North west England

KEEP UP the fight guys. I wish the rest of the country would come out in solidarity. Keep showing them we are not putting up with it.

**Janet Allen**  
Facebook

WE HAVE a government that is taking away workers' rights and anything else they can get their hands on. Time to stand up and fight back.

**Ray Carter**  
Facebook

The Real story  
behind 'success'  
of delivery apps

# NOT TURNING A PROFIT

Plus Riders  
speak out about  
accidents and  
stress

Grocery service  
Getir joins a list  
of much hyped but  
unprofitable delivery  
firms. Sophie Squire and  
Sam Ord explore the industry's  
business model, and speak to Getir  
riders about their work

**N**EVERY major city, it's easy to spot the blue bags of Deliveroo workers or the orange bags of Just Eat riders on bikes or mopeds. The workers employed face harsh conditions as they are pitched into the latest way for bosses to make money.

But there are also surprising features of these firms that seem to go against the logic of capitalism.

New customers download delivery apps every day, and the number of orders have soared since the pandemic. Yet many of these companies just can't make a profit. In fact, most aren't expected to be profitable for years to come.

Fast food delivery companies say one reason they aren't raking in profits is because outgoings are too high. That's why, for example, Stuart delivery which works for Just Eat has recently slashed some payments for workers.

But the real reason is about how the market pressures firms to innovate constantly to beat out their rivals.

The food delivery market is highly saturated with hundreds of start-ups looking to cash in. While there are major tenders, none in Britain have effectively dominated the market. This means the

battle is on to give the quickest service, have the best app, provide the cheapest delivery and accumulate the most users.

Food delivery companies spend millions on advertisements, gimmicks and technological innovations to draw users in.

Deliveroo once offered a service where users could enjoy a luxury meal in a helicopter.

Just Eat spent £50 million on advertising during ITV's dating show Love Island.

## Afloat

But amassing millions more users annually isn't solving the industry's lack of profitability. So, what is keeping it going?

Instead of going under, companies such as Deliveroo and Just Eat are kept afloat by investments.

When Deliveroo was founded in 2013 it found a niche. Other food apps advertised restaurants and provided a way for customers to pay. But it left restaurants to organise their own delivery, and many could not provide the service.

As a new innovation Deliveroo received attention from investors who saw potential in the company. This means the

Two years after Deliveroo was founded it received over £18 million from several investors. And despite never making any profit, Amazon handed it £421 million for a partnership deal in 2019.

In total the company has received almost £1 billion, but has lost almost as much.

All this speculation is a product of capitalism that constantly lurches into crisis. That's why competition for service users and investment deals comes first for companies like Deliveroo and Just Eat, rather than the process of delivering food.

"I hate working here. I get tired and am expected to drive down busy roads," he explained. "Sometimes I can't even remember making a delivery. It is very dangerous."

Although the actual process of delivering food is seen as less important to the bosses, labour still keeps the business running.

"The business is new and growing, so if we turn our devices off we immediately get shouted at by management."

## Innovations

If you were to buy shares in Just Eat the bosses could spend that money on anything from workers' wages to more innovations. The money would go into something real.

In return the investors get something that isn't real—a claim to the future profits of the company paid as dividends. Karl Marx coined the term "fictitious capital" to describe this process, which also encompasses the goings-on of the stock market.

He explained that the unending swapping of fictitious capital between capitalists was "wholly illusory."

Venture capitalists and other investors

# 'I hate working here. It's really dangerous'—Getir rider

STRESS, FATIGUE and dangerous conditions are all part of a normal day for workers employed in the quickly expanding delivery industry.

Arham is a courier for Getir in London. He told Socialist Worker, "Managers have too much power and treat us like slaves."

"I get called in on my day off—they want us to keep delivering. I have done hundreds of deliveries and I don't even get time for food."

Arham studies and took the job because Getir provides the electric bikes and equipment drivers need. But he is deeply unhappy.

"I hate working here. I get tired and am expected to drive down busy roads," he explained. "Sometimes I can't even remember making a delivery. It is very dangerous."

Although the actual process of delivering food is seen as less important to the bosses, labour still keeps the business running.

"The business is new and growing, so if we turn our devices off we immediately get shouted at by management."

## Frustration

"Managers don't know what they're doing so they take their frustration out on us. If you stand up for yourself, they just sack you."

James also works for Getir in London. He told Socialist Worker, "I never get paid on time and sometimes the pay wrong. Then you have to call and email people to try and get your money."

"If others want to work for Getir it's okay for a few weeks, it feels

stable. But supervisors expect too much from you. I'm always tired and have no time to eat with my family or friends."

Jay works for Getir in east London.

He told Socialist Worker that couriers have been taken to hospital with broken bones.

"One night I swerved around a bus and hit the kerb. I was okay, but it could have been much worse," he explained. "I have been in many close calls with dangerous drivers. You don't need a full motorcycle licence to ride these bikes, this is some people's first time riding."

**Competing**  
Jay is in a group chat with some friends who are also couriers. They have all experienced dangerous situations.

Pointing to a photo on his phone he said, "This guy was dragged from his bike and beaten by people who stole his phone."

Jay has experience working for Just Eat and other fast food delivery services. He believes it's better working for Getir.

"There are issues, but we aren't competing with others, we get paid hourly," he said.

"I didn't have much money and I just wanted to rest. I was working every day before changing. Getir gives new drivers £600 for joining—

Names have been changed

# 'Dark stores' and the speed service to reach new market

DELIVERY START-UPS that bring hot food to your door may have been the favourite of investors five years ago, but now there's a new trend in town.

From taxi services to food service, the latest market is quick delivery of goods. Behind this lies "dark shop companies". These essentially buy items at wholesale prices and employ workers to collect and deliver them at speed—and at retail prices.

Covid lockdowns meant millions of people turned to delivery services, preferring to order from the safety of their own homes.

While major supermarkets have offered delivery services for years, bosses saw an opportunity to provide a much faster service.

Companies like Getir, Gorilla and Jiffy offer to deliver your groceries in as little as ten minutes.

**Populated**  
Instead of workers picking food from the aisles of a supermarket, or even a large distribution centre, food is stored in a series of the small "dark shops".

In theory these shops, located in heavily populated urban areas, are close to all potential customers to make delivery times short.

They don't need to be set up in large spaces like a supermarket—they simply need to store groceries. This keeps costs and other outgoings down.

Pickers who work in dark shops are

rewarded with bonuses for making up the most orders in the shortest amount of time. Delivery drivers at Getir can earn an extra £100 for completing 135 orders in a week.

But the drive for more speed in the delivery industry comes at the expense of workers.

A rider for Getir in Turkey, where the company originated, was recently fired from his job for speaking out.

He said, "I am working 14 hours a day. I have no purpose, no goal. Did I come to the world just to work? The last time I went on a holiday was in 2017."

The company tried to suggest that his dismissal had nothing to do with the interview.

Getir and similar companies attempt to distance themselves from the likes of Deliveroo and Uber by employing their workers on full time or part-time contracts.

But this doesn't stop the maltreatment of workers in the industry.

Workers in Turkey said that they were laid off in 2020 when mandatory lockdowns ended and the demand for Getir decreased.

One worker said, "We formed a WhatsApp group. We wanted to do a strike. But they (the commission) found out about it and dispersed it.

"They were fine when business was booming, but now they're kicking us all out."

that was my rent so that was the main factor for me."

Before working for Getir, Jay was a delivery driver for another company. He said bad treatment of workers is common across the whole industry.

"I got Covid twice from having to enter all these different restaurants so people could eat throughout the pandemic," he said. "Sometimes I'd get paid just a few pounds for such high risk."

"There was no consideration for our safety. We were relied on by millions of people, so we were in a hard situation. People were really scared to deliver and we saw people around us get really sick."

Jay also believes that Getir could do more to protect riders.

"Head office and our managers see our names on a computer or phone screen. They think we're robots," he added.

"We only get 30 minute breaks, which isn't enough if you've woken up for a morning shift."

"Some delivery times are hard to meet. Managers stress safety, but if I get hurt I might lose my job."

These things are kept quiet when you apply."

On its website Getir states that it "cares about the people that make all of this possible." But in the gig economy, exploitation will always reign supreme.

**WHAT WE STAND FOR**

**These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.**

**INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION**

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

**REVOLUTION NOT REFORM**

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

**THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD**

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

**INTERNATIONALISM**

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women.

We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We oppose discrimination against disabled people including those who experience mental distress.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

**THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY**

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests.

We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions. To join us, turn to page 16 or go to [www.swp.org.uk](http://www.swp.org.uk) or phone 020 7840 5602

# Socialist Workers Party meetings



<b>BIRMINGHAM</b> <b>Do we need a revolution to save the planet?</b> Wed 2 Mar, 7pm 281-634-5938	<b>DEVON AND CORNWALL</b> <b>Why strikes are important</b> Thu 3 Mar, 7.30pm 897-1685-8334	<b>LEEDS</b> <b>Can art change the world?</b> Thu 3 Mar, 6pm, Hyde Park Book Club, 27-29 Headingly Ln, Headingley, LS6 1BL	<b>LONDON: ISLINGTON</b> <b>Omicron, corruption and crisis—how can we get rid of the Tories?</b> Thu 3 Mar, 7pm 854-8245-8715
<b>BRIGHTON AND HOVE</b> <b>Can there be a revolution in Britain?</b> Thu 3 Mar, 6.30pm 818-9286-5617	<b>EAST MIDLANDS</b> <b>Robin Hood—earl, outlaw or rebel?</b> Wed 2 Mar, 7pm 354-874-4790	<b>LIVERPOOL</b> <b>Ukraine, Russia, Kazakhstan and the West—are we heading for war?</b> Wed 2 Mar, 7pm 493-925-5919	<b>LONDON: SOUTH EAST</b> <b>China, the Uyghurs and the left</b> Thu 3 Mar, 7pm 529-913-6390
<b>CARDIFF</b> <b>What does climate justice look like?</b> Wed 2 Mar, 7.30pm 630-181-4857	<b>CAPITALISM AND THE ROOTS OF SLAVERY</b> Thu 3 Mar, 7.30pm 832-8746-7480	<b>LONDON: HACKNEY</b> <b>How can Palestine be free from apartheid?</b> Thu 3 Mar, 7.30pm 832-8746-7480	<b>LONDON: TOWER HAMLETS</b> <b>Ukraine, Russia and the West—are we heading for war?</b> Wed 2 Mar, 7.30pm 818-391-0420
<b>CHESTERFIELD</b> <b>Sexism, corruption and the police</b> Thu 3 Mar, 7pm 13/14 Chesterfield Rd, S40 1AR 828-532-8731	<b>HUDDERSFIELD</b> <b>Is revolution possible in the 21st century?</b> Wed 2 Mar, 6.30pm 290-168-1804	<b>LONDON: HARINGEY</b> <b>A rebel's guide to Rosa Luxemburg</b> Thu 3 Mar, 7.30pm 4593-881-576	<b>MANCHESTER</b> <b>Marxism and mental health</b> Wed 2 Mar, 7pm St Peter's House, Oxford Rd, M13 9GH 323-178-7151
<b>COVENTRY</b> <b>Tory attacks on civil liberties—is Britain becoming a police state?</b> Wed 2 Mar, 7.30pm 823-945-1917	<b>KENT</b> <b>Mindshift—how culture transformed the human brain</b> Thu 3 Mar, 8.15pm 434-623-8064		<b>NEWCASTLE</b> <b>Women, resistance and revolution—the real tradition of International Women's Day</b> Thu 3 Mar, 7pm Tyneside Irish Centre, 43 Gallowgate, NE1 4SG 368-595-2712



The Socialist Workers Party continues to hold mostly online meetings during the pandemic. This ensures that there can still be collective and safe discussion, organising and actions. Occasionally branches will hold in-person meetings with precautions taken for a safe environment.

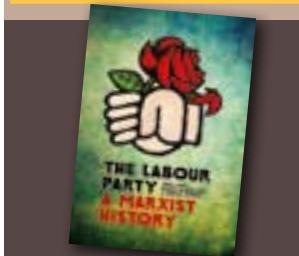
Most of the meetings will be held using the Zoom system. Download the Zoom app onto your phone or computer and just before the time given for your local meeting ask to "Join a meeting".

You can then enter the number printed on this page for the appropriate meeting. **The password for all meetings is 967537.**

Make sure you look at the SWP Facebook page [facebook.com/SocialistWorkersParty](https://facebook.com/SocialistWorkersParty) for news of national online meetings and other updates.

<b>LONDON: ISLINGTON</b> <b>Omicron, corruption and crisis—how can we get rid of the Tories?</b> Thu 3 Mar, 7pm 854-8245-8715	<b>NEWCASTLE</b> <b>Women, resistance and revolution—the real tradition of International Women's Day</b> Thu 3 Mar, 7pm Tyneside Irish Centre, 43 Gallowgate, NE1 4SG 368-595-2712	<b>SCHEFFIELD AND SOUTH YORKSHIRE</b> <b>Women, resistance and revolution—the real tradition of International Women's Day</b> Thu 3 Mar, 7pm Central United Reform Church, 60 Norfolk St, S1 2JB 528-174-9278
<b>LONDON: SOUTH EAST</b> <b>China, the Uyghurs and the left</b> Thu 3 Mar, 7pm 529-913-6390	<b>NORWICH</b> <b>Ukraine, Russia and the West—are we heading for war?</b> Wed 2 Mar, 7.30pm 906-652-5299	<b>SOUTHAMPTON</b> <b>Is Britain becoming a police state?</b> Thu 3 Mar, 7.30pm 434-623-8064
<b>LONDON: TOWER HAMLETS</b> <b>Ukraine, Russia and the West—are we heading for war?</b> Wed 2 Mar, 7.30pm 818-391-0420	<b>OXFORD AND THAMES VALLEY</b> <b>Omicron, corruption and crisis—how can we get rid of the Tories?</b> Wed 2 Mar, 7pm 861-2001-6477	<b>SWANSEA AND WEST WALES</b> <b>Fake news and alternative facts—who controls the media?</b> Thu 3 Mar, 7pm 914-9548-1031
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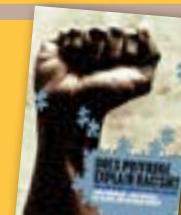
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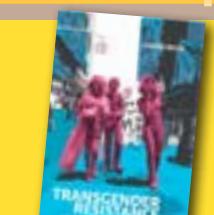
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# Even fiction can't do justice to the weird world of the rich

Netflix's true story of a fake heir who conned New York's elite is compelling—but when reality is so shocking, drama can get in the way, writes **Lola Bhlaire**

**EVERY EPISODE** of Netflix's *Inventing Anna* begins with the same quote. "This story is completely true... except for the parts that are totally made up".

It needles at the viewer as the series continues until you find yourself questioning, but what is true?

The real story the series is based on—an article in the *New Yorker* magazine—seems too good to be true. It's about the life of a fake German heir Ann Delvey—real name Anna Sorokin—who scammed her way into the world of the New York elite.

Sorokin's tale of deception, scam artistry, and extortion of the rich made her a sort of folk hero. It broke into the impenetrable spaces of the 1 percent and revealed them to inhabit a shallow world of image, behaviour and ostentatious wealth.

The real story of Sorokin and her quest for wealth is a genuine feat in scam artistry.

Seemingly through wits alone she almost secured £22 million to run a new exclusive club in the centre of New York.

She lived out of expensive hotels and the spare rooms of wealthy acquaintances.

The story is told through the eyes of journalist Jessica Pressler, and her girl boss quest to break the story despite her vicious male editors—another embellished detail.

## Foreboding

It's shot like a cheesy, Hallmark made for TV movie, which has the effect of diverting the foreboding sense of drama.

It feels as if it wants to present Sorokin's story like a teen drama, so it doesn't delve much into its more compelling aspects.

Did Anna truly believe her own lies?

Can you really get by among the super wealthy by knowing how to play the part? Did Anna really do anything wrong—and who did she really hurt?

These questions go largely unexplored and unanswered.

The show's consistent dramatisation of the truth creates only creates a list of questions to google later.

The truth is often stranger than fiction.

In this case, the decision to ramp up Sorokin's story with glamour shots and soap opera dialogue undermines the show's potential.

Anna was a real-life character—and what really happened is far more interesting than whatever a writers' room at Netflix can come up with.

*Inventing Anna* is available now on Netflix



THE TEENAGE residents in the film *La Mif* all have problems to grapple with

## Love and trauma inside a care home

### FILM

#### LA MIF

Directed by Fred Baillif  
In cinemas from Friday 25 February

**LA MIF** (*The Fam*) is a snapshot of the lives of a group of young women and those who care for them in a residential care home.

Each one has a story to tell, and each grapples with their own issues, whether that be sexuality, suicide or grief.

The film follows the fallout after 17 year old Audrey is discovered having sex with a younger boy also living at the care home.

To save the reputation of the care home and avoid the press, the home becomes exclusively female.

As questions are asked and tensions rise among the

residents and the workers, other events threaten to spread further division.

But despite the chaos and the frequent fights, the relationships between the young women hold tight.

Their love and loyalty to each other is the light in a film that deals with so many tragic and heartbreakening events.

The home's residents are what draw you into the film.

But it has equally important things to say about the people who care for them.

We see how caring for young people who have gone through unimaginable trauma carries a high emotional cost.

During one team meeting a social worker tries to hide her tears after hearing that a resident has lost her father.

At all times, there's a sense

that those who care try to do the best they can with the very limited resources they've been given.

The film alludes to the pinch on services, even if it doesn't deal with it explicitly.

At the start of the film, the care home only really houses older teenagers.

But as it progresses, the residents gets younger. In the film's last scene, a toddler is brought into the care home.

With brilliantly natural performances from its young actors, *La Mif* is a believable film that treats young people in the care system and the workers with a great amount of sensitivity.

It is a film that doesn't shy away from presenting the system's horrors without ever sensationalising them.

**Sophie Squire**

### FILM

#### SORRY WE MISSED YOU

Available on BBC iPlayer until Friday 14 March

KEN LOACH'S film *Sorry We Missed You* tells the story of a family torn apart as they struggle to survive on low-paid, casualised work.

It begins as Ricky takes a job as a parcels courier. He's promised potentially well-paid work on a self-employment contract that says he'll be his own boss. The reality soon turns out to be very different.

With all his work monitored and tracked through a handheld computer, he's not in control at all.

Instead he's constantly pushed and pressured to hit delivery targets by his manager who can threaten to take his work off him at any time.

Being his "own boss" does mean he has to pay



Delivery driver Ricky

for his own van—so he's in debt right from the start.

He can't even take time off unless he organises his own cover, or else he faces a fine and a sanction. Ricky works far too long hours.

His wife faces the same problems as a carer, who's only paid for the visits she makes to clients' homes—not for time spent travelling, or overtime.

The work wrecks their lives, and even their relationships with those closest to them.

But when the stresses seep into their family, they face a crisis their jobs won't allow them space to fix.

They're trapped in a spiral of sanctions, debt and stress.

*Sorry We Missed You* exposes the misery of work on zero-hours, bogus self-employment contracts and the damage it does to people's lives.

It hits home because the film reflects a number of real life examples of the fatal impact this industry can have.

Figures such as 53 year old Don Lane, a DPD delivery driver who collapsed after being fined by the firm for attending a medical appointment, have cast a long shadow over this film.

**H**OW should socialists respond when faced with two major imperialist powers standing at the brink of war?

It's a question raised sharply by the current stand-off over Ukraine between the US—and its Nato and European Union partners—and the Russian Federation.

The right and the media are clear that we must always support "our" country against any other, especially when it comes to war.

They are joined by Keir Starmer's Labour, which says the Russian state is uniquely aggressive and corrupt. They point to president Vladimir Putin's terrible human rights record and say, surely we must all stand together against this bully.

In doing so, Labour ignores the way Britain has bombed, tortured and exploited its way around the world.

Genuine socialists acknowledge the reactionary nature of the Russian state.

We do not seek to cover up Putin's crimes in Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Chechnya and beyond. Nor do we ignore the racism and homophobia of his regime.

But our starting point is to say we want an end to the system that produces war—and therefore our primary enemy is the government at home.

We will not back slaughter of working class people in eastern Europe at the behest of Boris Johnson and Joe Biden.

And we hope by raising a flag of internationalism we can show workers in Russia that we do not consider them our enemy. Instead, we want to encourage them to mount their own resistance to Putin.

**I**Nspiration comes from the revolutionary resistance to the First World War—which saw at least 15 million people dead.

When the war began in 1914, liberals and reformist socialists jumped to support the governments in their own countries. They decried the "atrocities" and "imperialism" of the other side.

French socialists denounced German expansionism while German social democrats attacked the tyranny of the Russian Tsar. And Russian liberals pleaded the case of Serbs oppressed by the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Even much of the left decided its own ruling class was more progressive than other nations.

But a tiny minority of revolutionaries stood against this fakery and insisted the crimes of their own ruling class were their primary concern.

By focusing on the battle at home, they said they could help bring down the system

that stood behind war, and the oppression of smaller nations.

Karl Liebknecht, a left MP for the German social democrats, was the first to vote against the war. Denied a chance to speak in parliament, he issued a leaflet explaining his position. "We must wage this political struggle alongside the proletariat of other countries, as they struggle against their own imperialists."

For Liebknecht that didn't mean excusing oppression carried out by his rulers' enemies. While opposing his own ruling class, he did not forget about British oppression of

"Opposition to war flowed over into revolt against the ruling classes"

US PRESIDENT Joe Biden with Russian president Vladimir Putin

# THE MAIN ENEMY IS AT HOME

In times of war the ruling class of one nation is always quick to blame the aggression and violence of another. But socialists and anti-war campaigners in imperialist countries should target their own ruling class, argues Yuri Prasad

and German secret diplomacy," it continued. "Here in our own land is the enemy that the German people must combat. "We must wage this political struggle alongside the proletariat of other countries, as they struggle against their own imperialists."

For Liebknecht that didn't mean excusing oppression carried out by his rulers' enemies. While opposing his own ruling class, he did not forget about British oppression of

Ireland, India and much of Africa. Instead, he insisted socialists must acknowledge the leaders of the "other side" are murderers and oppressors but declare, your ruling class is just as bad, or worse.

In this principled stand, Liebknecht was isolated, both within his party and in parliament.

But his position was shared by the Russian revolutionary Vladimir Lenin.

"A revolutionary class cannot but wish for the defeat of its government in a reactionary war," Lenin wrote in 1915.

"Socialists must explain to the masses that they have no other road of salvation except the revolutionary overthrow of 'their' governments, and that advantage must be taken of these governments' embarrassments in the present war precisely for this purpose."

Despite being shunned by his party comrades, Liebknecht's position began to win support among ordinary people.

**N**1916 opposition to the war was growing among battle weary soldiers and starving civilians. On 1 May Liebknecht's group called an illegal demonstration in Berlin that 10,000 people attended.

One account has Liebknecht shouting from the middle of the crowd, "Down with the war. Down with the government." He was arrested for this and ultimately jailed.

During the second day of his trial, 55,000 workers in Berlin struck in his support.

As he was sentenced, the revolutionary shouted to the court, "No general ever wore a uniform with as much honour as I will wear prison uniform."

Liebknecht would pay a heavy price for his resistance after release from prison.

He was murdered by paramilitary police while "trying to escape" arrest in January 1919.

But the fusion of the fight against imperialist war with the class war outlined his murder—in the form of an explosion of working class anger.

In all wars, poor people are expected to pay a heavy price.

**I**N THE most extreme examples, the fighting becomes so widespread and horrific, it is too much for a professional army alone. Workers and sections of the middle class then face conscription into the military.

That happened in the First and Second World Wars, but also in the US during both the war in Korea from 1951 and again in Vietnam from 1964.

Not only are the young sent to fight and die abroad, but at home governments axe civil liberties, raise taxes and cut welfare.

To stop war, anti-war movements must reach out to

people struggling over these and other issues.

During the First World War the mass strike and defiant protests became the most crucial tactic—a way of uniting the resistance.

Every illegal demonstration undermined governments' claims to speak for "the people".

Strikes, particularly in munitions factories, made it increasingly difficult to conduct the war.

Mutinies in the trenches spread fear among the generals.

**T**HE REVOLTS by people under colonial oppression threatened to crack apart the empires for which the war was being fought.

To participate in illegal struggle in these circumstances was not only to put your life on the line.

It also involved backing the position of Liebknecht and Lenin that the primary enemy was your own ruling class.

And what followed was to vindicate Lenin's slogan, "Turn the imperialist war into a civil war".

On the Western Front in France in April 1917, half the French army refused to return to the front after an offensive cost 250,000 lives.

Some units raised the red flag and sang the revolutionary anthem, "The Internationale".

This was followed by a revolt of 50,000 soldiers in Italy, and rebellion by soldiers at a British base in northern France.

In Russia, February's International Women's Day protests eventually brought 400,000 workers to the streets demanding "Down with the autocracy" and "Down with the war".

These were the first steps towards the two 1917 revolutions.

In Hungary, workers—led by a former Russian prisoner of war—took power in 1918. A Communist and social democratic government took power in Czechoslovakia.

As mass strikes spread across the continent British prime minister Lloyd George wrote, "The whole of Europe is filled with the spirit of revolution.

"The whole existing order is being questioned by the mass of

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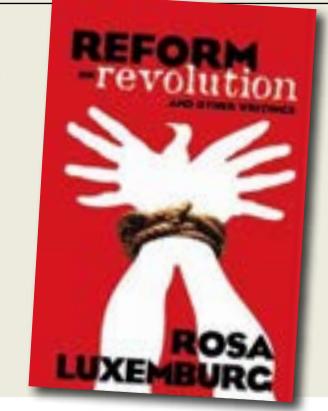
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## FOCUS ON LABOUR

# Labour's hard line on crime is the act of a serial offender



As deputy leader Angela Rayner recycles lines about being 'tough on crime', Nick Clark explains why the slogan helps the right

KEIR STARMER'S Labour has taken a darker, nastier turn.

Taking their cue from one of the most disgraceful chapters in Labour's history, his leading politicians are competing to demand the most vicious punishments for petty crimes.

Angela Rayner gets first prize for now. "On things like law and order I am quite hard line," she told an event last week.

Police should be able to storm people's houses at three in the morning just to "antagonise them."

Not only that, but they should shoot terror suspects first "and ask questions later."

"Is that the most controversial thing I've ever said?" she smirked. But she knows that this time Starmer won't ask her to apologise—the message comes from the top.

### Provoke

The phrase "Labour is the true party of law and order" should provoke memories of resentment and fear.

Shadow home secretary Yvette Cooper said it last week.

But it's word for word what Tony Blair said when he was shadow home secretary in 1993.

It was the beginning of the "tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime" policy that was a key part of Blair's government.

It meant years of giving police new ways to harass and criminalise working class and young people—then hit them with lengthy prison sentences.

Then, as now, this was part of Labour's response to an unpopular Tory government—an attempt to outflank them and appear even more right wing.

It's a dangerous tactic that can play into the hands of the right, spreading

division and blame among the working class.

But it was more than just a cynical manoeuvre.

There were politics involved. In a New Statesman article, Blair argued that crime was a "socialist issue."

The answer was a regime of blame and punishment.

So one of the first things Blair's government did in 1997 was publish its "no more excuses" policy paper on youth crime.

It included measures that allowed police to impose curfews and restrictions on children, and a "final warning" route towards prison sentences.

### Behaviour

It set the tone for years of new ways to criminalise working class people—often not for committing any crime.

"Anti-social behaviour"

became a new way for authorities to punish any behaviour they deemed unacceptable.

The notorious Anti-Social Behaviour Order—Asbo—allowed a magistrate to punish anyone they decided had behaved "in an anti-social manner that caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress."

This had nothing to do with socialism.

Instead, Blair's

inspiration came from

hard line conservative

thinkers from the US.

They said the free market was the best way to run society.

But they said there had to be ways of dealing with an "underclass" of people in poverty marginalised from society because they couldn't—or wouldn't—fit in.

The poorer you were,

the more likely you were

# Berta Cáceres—killed for defending the planet

by SARAH BATES

FEARLESS LAND defender and tireless fighter for indigenous rights Berta Cáceres was defiant until the end.

Born in 1971 in the city of La Esperanza, Honduras, she was assassinated at just 44 years old.

She was a victim of the lengths the rich will go to dominate our natural world.

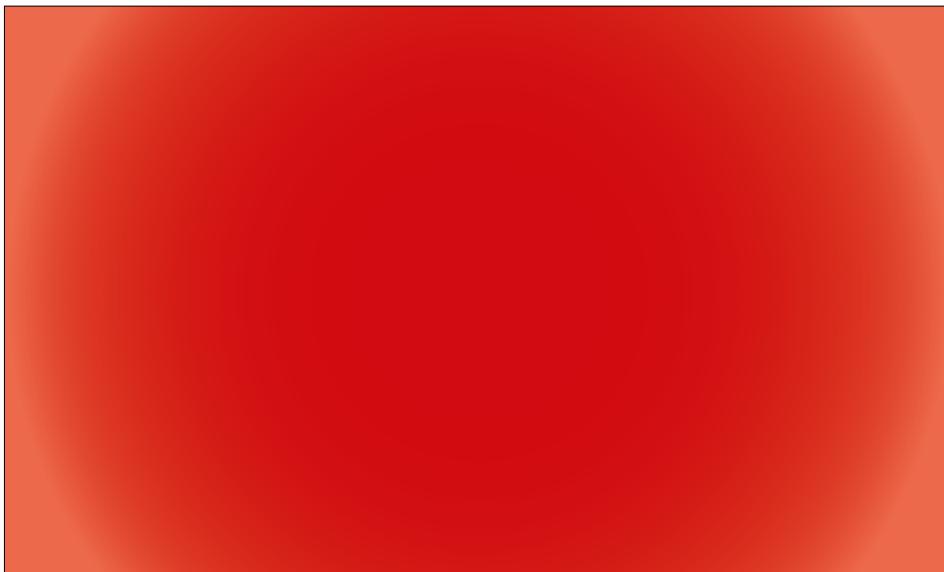
In 1993, when at university studying to be a teacher, Cáceres co-founded the organisation that would define the rest of her life—Council of Indigenous Peoples of Honduras (Copinh).

Copinh was established on “pillars of struggle—anti-capitalism, anti-patriarchy, and anti-racism.”

Cáceres waged battles against illegal logging and open cast mining, and spoke out about wider issues of social injustice.

Her last battle was to stop the Agua Zarca—a series of four dams in the Gualcarque river basin.

The project, managed by energy firm Desa, threatened



**ENVIRONMENTALIST AND indigenous fighter Berta Cáceres**

Cáceres’ Lenca indigenous people.

They argued the dam would contaminate drinking water, disrupt farming and tarnish the spiritual and cultural significance of the river.

From the off the battle was mired in bloodshed. Cáceres endured years of threats of rape, murder and attacks

on her loved ones. “I cannot live in peace, I am always thinking about being killed or kidnapped,” she once said.

“But I refuse to go into exile. I am a human rights fighter and I will not give up this fight.”

Cáceres led a campaign setting up blockades to disrupt construction, where the Honduran military and

private security forces shot at protesters. In her acceptance speech for the 2015 Goldman Environmental Prize she said, “Wake up—we are out of time.

“We must shake our conscious free of the rapacious capitalism, racism, and patriarchy that will only assure our own self destruction. Let us build societies

that are able to coexist in a dignified way, in a way that protects life.”

Despite her high profile, two thugs shot her in her sleep on 2 March 2016.

The state initially tried to claim she was the victim of a burglary or died as a result of infighting in Copinh.

Her death sparked protests and served to undermine the dam project she gave the last years of her life to stopping.

In July last year David Castillo, ex-boss of the Desa energy firm, was found guilty of ordering her execution.

His involvement at any level speaks not just to the cosy links between the Honduran and US governments, but the power of the fossil fuel industry.

Castillo trained at the elite US military school West Point. He then built a career in the Honduran armed forces and later co-founded Desa.

He used his military training and contacts to relentlessly harass Cáceres, and ultimately ordered her execution.

Today, some of her killers have been brought to justice.

And the Agua Zarca dam remains unbuilt after international backers withdrew funding in the months following her murder.

Honduras remains one of the most dangerous places for climate activists. Human rights organisation Global Witness says nearly 140 environmental defenders have been murdered in the country since 2012.

Cáceres is survived by her four children and mother, who helped expose the truth behind her death.

She leaves a powerful legacy of environmental struggle behind her. Extinction Rebellion named one of its boats used in protests after her.

Her words live on, speaking to an urgency that she displayed in life.

“We must undertake the struggle in all parts of the world, wherever we may be, because we have no spare or replacement planet.

“We have only this one, and we have to take action”.

This is the first in a series of columns on radical women to coincide with International Women’s Day on 8 March.

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## IN BRIEF

### New protests over polluting tunnel

ACTIVISTS AND residents of east London were set to protest this Saturday against the construction of the Silvertown tunnel.

The tunnel will stretch from Greenwich to Newham and will mean more pollution, increased motor traffic and higher emissions.

Doctors were also set to gather at the Newham mayor's office on Thursday of this week to highlight the cost the tunnel will have to people's health.

For more info go to [stopsilvertowntn.com](http://stopsilvertowntn.com)

### Solid strike vote on Sussex bins

OVER 60 refuse and recycling workers in Adur and Worthing have voted unanimously to strike. They are demanding uplifts in pay grades and a review into management practices.

An impressive 100 percent of workers voted in favour of strikes on a 90 percent turnout.

The members of the GMB union are also asking for increased rates of overtime and for changes in shift patterns.

### More delivery drivers join the fight

A STRIKE of workers for fast food delivery service Just Eat has spread to Leicester, and Dewsbury in West Yorkshire. Strikers in Chesterfield and Sunderland also rejoined the fight last week.

The members of the IWGB union began action after Stuart, a subcontractor of Just Eat, cut workers' wages from £4.50 to £3.40 for every trip in several cities.

The strikers have focused on picketing individual restaurants such as McDonald's and Greggs.

### Full steam ahead for strike in Rugby

WORKERS AT GE Steam Power factory in Rugby began strikes last Thursday. More than 75 Unite union members will strike for 12 days until 2 May.

The company has refused to negotiate over flexible working payments and are expecting workers to take on new roles without extra pay.

### Scaffolders' latest action postponed

THE UNITE union postponed a national day of action that was set for Tuesday at the Scunthorpe British Steel site. Scaffolders have struck since last year.

The scaffolders are paid up to 15 percent below the nationally-agreed rate by contractor Actavo at the North Lincolnshire site.

Unite claimed this cancellation of the protest was to encourage talks.

## TRANSPORT



LONDON TRANSPORT workers shouldn't pay for the pandemic

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

## 'Get round members' ahead of Tube strike

by SAM ORD

TUBE WORKERS are gearing up for strikes on Tuesday and Thursday of next week to protect jobs, pensions and working conditions.

The attacks on workers' conditions come after a funding arrangement between the government and Transport for London. Up to 600 station posts could be axed.

The action will cause huge disruption across the Underground, cancelling most services. Picket lines will target major stations as well as some depots.

The strike is part of a bigger fight to make sure workers don't pay for the impacts of the pandemic. It comes as workers on the Night Tube continue

strikes against plans to force all Underground workers to work night shifts.

The new action across the network will escalate the blow to bosses.

Tube worker Phil told Socialist Worker it's important to build for as many people as possible to be actively involved in the strikes.

"There's a lot of work to do this week, getting around stations and talking face to face to members," he said. "There was a mass members meeting last week which was good."

Phil believes there is a strong will to walk out and that most workers will strike.

All workers should have conversations and hold meetings to ensure a large strike across both days. Mick

Lynch, the RMT general secretary, said, "A financial crisis at London Underground has been deliberately engineered by the government to drive a cuts agenda, which would savage jobs, services, safety and threaten their working conditions and pensions."

"These are the very same transport staff praised as heroes for carrying London through Covid for nearly two years."

"Staff will not pay the price for this cynically engineered crisis."

Workers are right not to roll over and accept job cuts.

After the strikes, workers must be prepared to escalate and the union shouldn't delay in calling extra dates that cover a longer period.

## CLASS

### Figures reveal the deep class divide in Scotland—don't let SNP pass the buck

NEW OFFICIAL figures have rammed home the deep class divide in Scotland.

The richest 10 percent are more than 200 times wealthier than the poorest 10 percent.

The statistics come from a survey by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

It found one in three people said they do not have the required savings to keep themselves above the poverty line should they lose their job.

A spokesperson

for the Scottish government described the level of inequality as "unacceptable", but said it is the fault of Britain's "economic model".

She said, "Where we have the powers we have taken progressive action, which protects those on lower and middle incomes".

And she added that it "uses an inclusive growth model at the heart of our economic strategy".

Really? The Scottish National Party has been in

charge in Scotland for 15 years.

It now has the power to set all rates and bands of income tax.

It can take money away from the rich and shift it into the pockets of poorer people if it wants to.

But, although its policies are slightly different to the Tories, it runs a Scotland obsessed with winning over the multinationals and wealthy business people.

● Longer online at [socialistworker.co.uk](http://socialistworker.co.uk)

## CLEANERS

### Churchill cleaners out again on south east trains

HUNDREDS OF cleaners employed by outsourcer Churchill on four rail companies in south east England were set to strike over pay on Wednesday of this week.

Members of the RMT union are demanding £15 an hour as the cost of living crisis escalates.

They have worked throughout the pandemic to keep trains across London and the south east running.

The 24-hour strike was set to hit services on Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern, Southeastern, Eurostar and HS1 trains.

The cleaners were also set to rally outside parliament in central London on Wednesday morning.

## CONDUCTORS

### 'We're striking for a fair deal on Transpennine'

STRIKING conductors on TransPennine Express trains have hit out at bosses' tricks that cheat them out of fair pay.

Members of the RMT union have held weekly Sunday strikes as part of their dispute. And they are refusing to electronically scan tickets and work overtime.

Conductor Ray told Socialist Worker, "We're striking four Sundays in a row for a fair deal.

"There are other conductors out there using new technology to scan tickets and are being paid 2p a scan. Our company has decided it's not new technology and we should be doing it for free as part of the job. We disagree with

Churchill cleaner Bella told Socialist Worker, "People are choosing between heating their homes and feeding their children."

Bella and her colleagues aren't just fighting for pay.

"Key demands are company sick pay, travel paid the same as those employed directly by the operators and a proper pay rise," she explained.

"It's the guys in London, I feel sorry for—the fact that a lot of them are paying about £240 a month just to get to work."

Bella hopes the strike will have "a knock on effect for all low paid workers".

She wants this to give them the confidence to take action while also "putting a strain on the Tories".



that and want a fair and balanced deal to go along with that.

"We also used to get an enhancement for working rest days and Sundays, outside of our working week. The company has decided we're no longer entitled to that pay."

The strike remains united and strong across all Transpennine services. Other unions have sent messages of solidarity and other train workers have shown support.

## EDUCATION

### Private school teachers protest outside parliament

OVER 1,500 teachers at 23 private schools returned to picket lines this week in a huge battle to protect pensions and defy fire and rehire attacks.

Teachers at schools run by The Girls Day School Trust struck on Tuesday of this week and were set to strike again on Wednesday. Strikers were set to rally at Parliament Square in central London on Wednesday afternoon.

Two weeks ago, before half term, strikes were widespread and vibrant,

with at least 40 picket lines. Strikers held banners, sang and chanted in an attempt to defend the Teachers' Pension Scheme.

Bosses want to withdraw from the scheme, cutting pensions by thousands of pounds in many cases.

In a parallel fight, around 100 teachers at Forest School in east London were also set to strike Wednesday. They face similar attacks on pensions.

● For a list of schools on strike and how to send solidarity go to [neuleft.org](http://neuleft.org)

## PAY BATTLES

# Build fighting strikes to win real pay rises

**AS PRICES surge, everyone needs to get behind workers who are fighting for pay rises.**

Chep UK strikers in Manchester continue their battle for a real pay rise after voting 94 percent in favour of continuing their strike as they enter their 12th week of action.

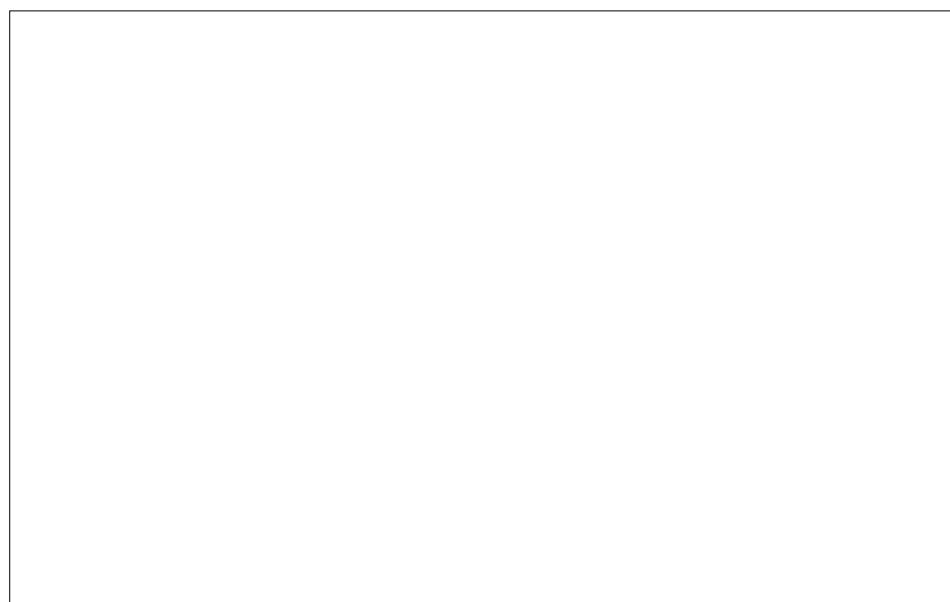
Workers were offered a 1.8 percent pay rise, followed by 2 percent after they threatened strikes, despite working throughout the pandemic and Chep's profits skyrocketing.

The strike began on 17 December and escalated to all-out action. The first pay talks began last Wednesday and a rally was held to show support for the strikers.

A banner reading "Workers feel undervalued. Fair pay now" was accompanied by local trades council banners and Usdaw, GMB, Unison and RMT union flags.

**AIRBUS WORKERS** in Broughton, north Wales, and Filton, Gloucestershire have voted for strikes over pay.

The 3,000 members of the Unite union were offered an "unacceptable low" pay offer



RALLYING AT the Chep UK picket line in Manchester last week

for 2021 despite a pay freeze in 2020.

The Broughton and Filton factories make and test wings for Airbus' commercial planes. Strikes could begin in March. Workers voted 94 percent in favour of action on an 84 percent turnout.

**TUG BOAT** workers employed by Svitzer Marine at

Teesport, near Middlesbrough, could strike next month over pay.

The company has imposed a pay freeze on the Unite union members who voted 100 percent for action.

The first strike will begin next Tuesday for 48 hours, followed by two further 24 hours strikes on 9 and 26 March.

**MORE THAN** 150 workers at Riverside Bakery in Nottingham are balloting for strikes over a bosses' pay offer that would cut overtime and premium rates of pay.

The plant produces quiches, flans and tarts for major retailers including Tesco, Asda, Sainsbury's, Aldi and Marks and Spencer.

## NHS CLEANERS

## Clean up sick pay scandal

OUTSOURCED cleaners at London Bridge hospital have launched a campaign to address health and safety concerns and to give them the same benefits as those directly employed by the hospital.

The members of the IWGB union, who are outsourced to Compass Group by the hospital, are also asking for a £12.50 an hour living wage and to stop "endemic" bullying.

A cleaner at the hospital, Ramona Marredo Mendez, said, "The managers have sent us without PPE to clean areas that are full of infected people."

"When I caught covid at work, I was forced to isolate for two weeks without the sick pay that directly-employed workers get."

"The pay is already so low, I can't afford to take two weeks off on just £96.35 a week."

## POST OFFICE

## Post strike to counter snub

POST OFFICE workers are set to ballot for strikes next month against a pay freeze.

Members of the CWU union met on Wednesday of last week to plan the first steps of a strike campaign.

Post Office bosses have refused repeatedly to give workers a pay rise.

Post Office Supply Chain area rep Rob Jones told the meeting, "Our members are absolutely livid. They worked hard all through the pandemic and now they get smacked in the mouth."

And counters area rep Carole Bowmaker said, "I've never seen them so up for a fight as they are now."

"This is the fight, let's have it," was the message from CWU deputy general secretary postal Terry Pullinger

The ballot is set to run from Monday 7 March to Monday 28 March.

**Nick Clark**

## ANTI-UNION LAWS

## Cross Country rail strikes called off after just a threat

THE RMT union last week suspended scheduled strikes by Cross Country senior conductors and train managers following a legal challenge.

The action was pulled without even going to court.

The workers are in a dispute over jobs and safety.

In a message to union members, RMT general secretary, Mick Lynch said, "Cross Country asked us to suspend the industrial action as a 'gesture of goodwill' whilst at the same time referring to the possibility of pursuing the matter through the High Court in their attempts to prevent you and

your colleagues from taking lawful industrial action."

Details of the court challenge are unclear. But the RMT says it's based on the anti-union laws.

In another letter to members, Lynch said, "Your union has sought legal advice on this challenge and the union's solicitors inform us that we do not have reasonable prospects of defending it in court."

In the face of bosses' attacks, Cross Country workers should be prepared to return to picket lines with harder-hitting action.

And that may require defying the law.

## GRAT ORMOND STREET HOSPITAL



Protesting outside the courts last week

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

## Half a success at Gosh

STRIKING SECURITY guards at Great Ormond Street Hospital (Gosh) in central London continued strikes this week having secured a partial success in their battle for the right to picket.

A court injunction had banned the UVW union members and their supporters from "vigorous dancing", waving banners and making any other loud noise within 200 metres of the hospital.

The High Court ruled last Friday that they could picket and protest, but only in zones designated by the hospital.

It still bans strikers and the UVW's co-founder Petros Elia from organising protests within 50 metres of the trust.

Elia said strikers were "pleased we were able to claw back some of the rights which were taken and attempted to be taken from us. But the restrictions in place are still unjustifiably oppressive."

He added, "UVW will continue to fight back against these draconian attacks from wealthy bosses and call on the union movement to support the strike."

Security guards began a six-week strike earlier this month for the same pay and conditions as workers employed

directly by the NHS and an end to outsourcing.

There are still restrictions outside the Paul O'Gorman Building, where strikers have previously held successful rallies.

No more than six strikers and UVW union members will be able to gather outside the building at once, with the risk of a fine or imprisonment.

Striking security guard Mimi Longagu voiced her frustration at how Gosh was dragging proceedings out.

"They are wasting our time. It's more money, and it's more time."

The union also tweeted its dismay that hospital management "gave around £40,000 to fat cat lawyers (which could have gone to the care of sick children) to try and injunct their 33 security guards".

While a partial success, the court decision is still a big attack on the rights of workers to protest and picket.

Trade unionists, socialists and campaigners should build solidarity for the Gosh strikers and join their picket lines.

●Tweet messages of support to the strikers and the union @UVWunion Support the union fundraiser for the legal costs here [bit.ly/UVW0222](http://bit.ly/UVW0222)

## HEALTH SERVICE

## Join protests to fight for the NHS this Saturday

HEALTH workers and campaigners are set to come together at dozens of protests across England and in Scotland this Saturday.

The SOS NHS group, which includes unions and campaigners, including Keep Our NHS Public, has called the day of action to highlight its core demands.

It wants emergency funding of £20 billion to save lives this winter, and a massive programme of investment to protect the NHS for future generations.

The group also says staff should be paid "properly", and that without fair pay staffing shortages will cost lives.

The day of action will feature action ranging from street stalls and rallies to larger demonstrations.

In central London, campaigners are coming

together for a march with strikers from Great Ormond Street hospital. The protest is supported by the NHS Staff Voices and NHS Workers Say NO groups.

There are also marches planned in Oxford and Margate in Kent.

●Go to [sosnhs.org](http://sosnhs.org) for details of activity near you

**THE GMB** union last week declared a partial victory in a long-running dispute with outsourcing Mitie at St Georges hospital in south London.

Mitie has agreed to pay sick pay for all workers at the hospital. They've also won the £40 vouchers promised to workers at Christmas.

**PORTERS AND DOMESTICS** at Croydon hospital in south London are balloting for strikes over pay.



PICKETING AT the London School of Economics university in central London

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

## 'ESCALATE TO WIN' SAY UNI STRIKERS

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

### TENS OF thousands of workers launched strikes at 68 universities on Monday.

Their battle is over pensions, as well as for better pay, against heavy workloads, inequalities and precarious contracts—known as the four fights.

Strikers and supporters braved Storm Franklin with strong pickets in Brighton, Bristol, Leeds, Sheffield, Newcastle, Imperial College and the UAL in London, and in Glasgow.

Workers at City university in London held a joint UCU and Unison union picket, shutting down the university.

Other pickets moved online, such as in Manchester where over 200 people joined a Zoom call.

Members of the UCU union at 44 universities were on strike for five days last week over cuts to the USS pension scheme. Two days of

strikes over both pensions and the four fights disputes this week will be followed by a three-day walkout over the four fights from next Monday.

A London region demonstration was also set to take place on Tuesday.

Aggie, a UCU union member picketing at King's College London, told Socialist Worker, "Precarious workers are having to choose between paying their rent or paying into the pension scheme."

"It's a vicious cycle of not being paid enough because you're on a precarious contract and because of that not paying into the pension scheme."

Daniel, who works in the geography department at King's said, "Cuts to the USS scheme will have a significant impact on the sector, especially on attracting new workers."

Daniel stands to lose 36 percent of his pension. He says this is a "kick in the face".

"Student numbers are going up, which in some



UCU and Unison unions at City university, London, this week

ways is a good thing. But it's just not possible to give them the best student experience when we are so overworked," he told Socialist Worker.

"Covid really altered everything. Staff stepped up to move online, but there has been little acknowledgement of our effort."

"There have always been really good things and really bad things in our job."

"But now the scales have tipped, and the bad outweighs the good." Mark Abel, chair of

the strike coordinating committee at Brighton university, explained why workers striking on Monday about both the pensions and four fights dispute was important.

"Workers understand it's not credible to fight over just pensions."

"It only affects a section of the sector and doesn't touch issues like inequality," he told Socialist Worker.

"The issue of pay is also becoming critical with the cost of living going up." Mark

added members of the union are upset that only two strike days have been called over both disputes and have been effectively uncoupled.

"I think UCU general secretary Jo Grady thought that the USS dispute would be over by now."

"With that not being the case, it's not good that strikes over USS end this week."

Branch president of London's UCL university and national pay negotiator Sean Wallis told Socialist Worker that new tactics are needed.

"Jo Grady wrote to say that individual branches whose employers have threatened pay deductions could strike as part of a local dispute."

"Branches were in favour of this—some voted for additional days of strikes. But this was withdrawn by those at the top of the union."

UCU hinted that the branches affected could call a separate dispute.

Sean explained this could take up to three months,

which would benefit bosses. "It just wouldn't be sensible," he added.

"There is now only one thing that the union can do—that is to escalate strikes."

Members of Unison at nine universities are also striking on days that correspond with UCU strikes.

"This can boost the strikes," Sean said.

"But the more the union waits and leaves members in the dark about what to do next, the more demoralised people will become."

"We have a mandate to strike until 4 May. We have to use it."

More strikes over the four fights are set for Monday to Wednesday next week at 63 universities. This must not be the end of the battle.

With Boris Johnson's government deep in crisis, they can become a focal point for resistance to the Tories and the cost of living crisis.

To see which universities are on strike and on which days go to [bit.ly/UCUstrikes22](http://bit.ly/UCUstrikes22)